CHAPTER XXIII

DEATH AND AFTER DEATH

DISEASES AND WOUNDS

165 Few Rwala reach a very old age. More than four-fifths of the men either fall in war or perish in consequence of wounds received, 164 while the women die mostly when suckling their babies. Such women as survive this period generally grow to be very old. From diseases the Rwala suffer chiefly in the months of July and August, when they camp in the neighborhood of Damascus, in al-Ruta, Gowlan, al-Mzerib, and Kerajat al-Meleh (the vicinity of Etra and Caf). Kerajat al-Meleh are notorious for their ague, hemma, and malaria, shune; in al-Guba the flies are a real pest; likewise the strong winds which blow there all the time, whirling up the fine sand and dust, are very injurious to the eyes. All these districts are called bilad mabijje by the Rwala, who therefore prefer to camp in either the Nefud or al-Hamad, where the atmosphere is both clear and salubrious, bilad 'adijje.

The following are the diseases most universally known.

164 Hubta: pains in the spine and the head combined with a strong 757 fever. The patient wants to lie only on the flat of his back. For a cure he is burnt with a red-hot iron about the head and temples. This occurs most frequently in winter.

Gederi: smallpox. Treated with red clay diluted in water, which is then poured into the patient's eyes. This disease breaks out towards the end of the sferi season (October--December).

Sarba: pains in the stomach combined with fever and endless thirst. Its cure: the root of the nose is cut through so that it bleeds profusely, and the shoulders are burnt all over. Sometimes a thick thread is pulled through the skin of the shoulder and left there until the wound suppurates. The disease appears in winter, especially after one drinks cold water.

Mwallje: pains in the intestines, accompanied by swelling; also the abdomen hardens. It is treated by laxatives;